

March 11, 2010

To: Appropriations Committee

From: Steven Kleppin, Town of New Milford

RE: Governor Proposed Sweep of Community Investment Act Funding

As a municipal planner I am well aware at the tight budget constraints facing our town's and state. As Vice Chairman of the New Milford Farmland Preservation Committee, I am comfortable saying that any decrease in funds to this valuable program is a mistake and is shortsighted. However, this fund even at its current level of \$5 million dollars is insufficient to meet the demands and needs of the state.

The state cannot forget about the long term health of the state just because of budgetary deficits. I am not an advocate of continued borrowing, but slashing this program is not the answer. There are many unforeseen consequences of not funding the CIA. For example, in the Town of New Milford we have 1 farm in the final stages of selling their development rights to the state and a second farm that is close to submitting their application, which on the surface appears that it might score well. As we have indicated to you in the past, we are pursuing the preservation of approximately 1,200 acres of contiguous farmland which contains over 50% prime & important farmland soils. This is the only block like this in southern Litchfield County and according to Tim Abbott from the Housatonic Valley Association and Greenprint, one of the few left in all the county. Our next step was to work with the next farmer who owns approximately 350 acres of incredible active farmland. I believe we made some headway with him regarding preservation and I believe that was partly based on the success we had with our first applicant. Should these funds dry up or the state pull back from their commitments that would eliminate a lot of the trust and good will we've established to date. Even if there is a 1-2 year delay in funding and the state funds it again in the future, think of the numerous quality farms that will fall to development.

The state's farmland is a finite & precious resource that should be managed like it was a drinking water source. From a planning perspective the state must think of how it will feed itself in the long term given rising fuel costs, potential climate issues and terrorist threats.

Steve Kleppin, AICP